

VZCZCXRO3009
RR RUEHNZ
DE RUEHWL #0055/01 0520104
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 210104Z FEB 08
FM AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 5076
INFO RUEHNZ/AMCONSUL AUCKLAND 1625
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 5107
RUEHDN/AMCONSUL SYDNEY 0644
RHHMUNA/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHMFIUU/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 WELLINGTON 000055

SIPDIS

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SENSITIVE

STATE FOR STATE FOR EAP/ANP
PACOM FOR J01E/J2/J233/J5/SJFHQ

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PGOV PHUM KDEM SOCI NZ

SUBJECT: CODEL FALEOMAVAEGA STRESSES USG SUPPORT FOR PACIFIC; STRONG BILATERAL TIES WITH NEW ZEALAND

¶11. (U) Summary. Codel Faleomavaega visited New Zealand from January 31 to February 7. In Auckland, the Codel met with ConGen staff to discuss consular issues and traveled to Whangarei for the Waitangi Day celebrations on February 5-6. On February 4, the Codel held meetings in Wellington with Minister for Pacific Island Affairs Winnie Laban and Minister for Climate Change David Parker, and paid a courtesy call on the Ambassador. The Ambassador welcomed the Codel's visit and Congressman Faleomavaega's longstanding interest in Pacific affairs; he urged the Congressman to promote renewed Congressional engagement through the Asia Pacific Parliamentary Forum (APPF). The Codel also visited the Maori Language Commission and heard of the Commission's ongoing efforts to increase Maori fluency among Maori peoples as well as more broadly within New Zealand society. In all of his meetings, the Codel underscored the warm US-NZ bilateral relationship and USG interest in East Asia, particularly in the Pacific Islands. End Summary.

Remote Visa Processing for Samoan Applicants

¶12. (U) On February 1, Congressman Faleomavaega met with Consul General John Desrocher and Consular Chief Nick Greanias in ConGen Auckland offices. The principal subject of discussion was the Remote NIV Adjudication Program in Independent Samoa, wherein a conoff from Auckland visits Apia every quarter for one week for the sole purpose of doing NIV interviews. Congressman Faleomavaega, who had pushed hard for the institution of the program in late 2006, said he wanted to make sure the program was running well and requested a progress report. In a wide-ranging discussion, all participants agreed that it was functioning as intended, saving 125 Samoan residents every three months the expense and trouble of a trip to Auckland or elsewhere for an NIV interview. Everyone also agreed on the need to seek out any technical improvements that speeded up the interviews on Apia. For example, if local systems capacity increased to enable a conoff to conduct an interview in six minutes - still a very long time by consular standards - from the current 12 minutes, the capacity each week in Apia would at least double, thereby matching present need. Desrocher and Greanias promised to keep Faleomavaega posted on any developments in this area. The Congressman noted that he was getting numerous inquiries from constituents asking if their Tongan spouses could take advantage of the program. Greanias confirmed that there is nothing barring Tongans in Samoa from seeking visas in Apia, but that few have taken advantage of remote processing so far.

¶13. (SBU) On February 7, Codel Faleomavaega met with GNZ Minister for Pacific Island Affairs Winnie Laban. Congressman Faleomavaega noted that, in his capacity as Chairman of Asia and Pacific Subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, he is interested in pursuing stronger USG engagement in the region and

greater Washington focus on the Pacific Island nations. The Congressman thanked New Zealand for its cooperation with the US, noting that remittances and trade from New Zealand to the Pacific has contributed to stability. He added that despite the modest population of the island countries, the region supplies over half of the world's tuna and seabed mineral mining may be economically viable in the future. East Asia is the U.S.' largest trading partner and the USG military plays a key role in regional stability and security.

¶4. (SBU) Minister Laban responded that she remains optimistic about the Pacific region's future and commended the positive US-NZ bilateral relationship. New Zealand is a small country, but wants to support sustainable development among the island nations. She added that the NZ Business Council will host a business exposition in Auckland from March 5-6 to promote the private sector of the Pacific Islands. Laban pointed to two-way trade as a hallmark of New Zealand's approach to helping the islands strengthen their economies. One-way trade will only foster continued aid dependency, she said. Congressman Faleomavaega stressed the need for better education and improved management of fisheries; he commented that the leasing arrangements of some islands are not equitable. The Congressman discussed prospects for aquaculture development using Israeli research models.

¶5. (SBU) In his meeting with Minister for Climate Change David Parker, Congressman Faleomavaega applauded the Clark government's proposed climate change policy. Minister Parker said that the GNZ supported the USG position that developing countries need to contribute; equivalent effort is a sound principle. He argued that developed countries need to discuss capital flows to the developing world and how best to promote clean development. There are policies and cheap fixes that might be achieved through legislation and regulatory framework - developed countries should not have to

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finance everything. Parker deplored the attitude of some attendees at Bali that the developed world should foot the bill for climate change. For New Zealand, the country can do well on the energy front as New Zealand is blessed with renewable energy resources, continued Parker.

¶6. (SBU) Congressman Faleomavaega outlined his role on the global environment within the House of Representatives, and informed Parker that he would hold hearings on vulnerable islands in the next month. Tuvalu is one example of a low-lying country that could be in a dangerous situation as the ocean rises, and the Congressman promised to stay in touch with the GNZ on these issues. Parker responded that such countries must pursue adaptation, look to new technologies such as solar energy, and rethink subsidies that damage their energy policies. US companies are starting to do more with innovative technologies, and Parker cited one US venture capitalist fund financing solar technology research with mirrors vice photovoltaic cells. Parker summed up by saying that the world is not short of energy, but people are focused on using the wrong technologies. Protection of natural resources, e.g., fisheries, is often sidelined due to corruption, the Minister added.

Ambassador, Codel Discuss US-NZ Bilateral Relations

¶7. (SBU) During a February 4 courtesy call, the Ambassador welcomed Faleomavaega's visit, outlined the positive areas of bilateral engagement with New Zealand (e.g., Afghanistan, science and technology, Antarctica) and briefed the Congressman on USTR's recent P-4 announcement. He welcomed his interest in Maori language preservation in New Zealand, describing it as the "gold standard." Congressman Faleomavaega agreed that the nuclear issue should no longer detract from strengthening bilateral ties, and mentioned prospects for a fiber optic broadband line in Samoa. He and the Ambassador discussed the need for greater fisheries protection in the southern Pacific, aquaculture development and issues surrounding canneries in the Pacific islands. The Ambassador urged that Congress re-engage with the region through the Asia Pacific Parliamentary Forum (APPF).

¶18. (U) At the Maori Language Commission, Faleomavaega met with Huhana Rokx, Chief Executive of the Commission, who was accompanied by a number of staff members. Congressman Faleomavaega explained his interest in developing stronger ties with the Commission due to identifying best practices that might be useful for Samoan language preservation. The Congressman noted the growing lack of Samoan language knowledge among Samoan youth; there may be applications for Native American languages as well. Language is the umbilical cord that ties people to their culture, noted the Congressman, who added that the Hawaiian language is making a resurgence.

¶19. (U) CEO Rokx briefed the Congressman on the Commission's progress in launching the publication of a Maori dictionary as the first step towards a more thorough research of the origins of the Maori language and its relationship to other Polynesian languages. The CEO underscored the close working relationship that the Commission has with the education sector, which has been key to language revitalization efforts. The Commission is also stressing intergenerational use of language within the home, increased adult education, and the use of radio and television to increase home exposure to the Maori language. Rokx said the Commission, established in 1987, remains focused on increasing Maori language literacy. When 80 percent of the Maori population is involved in achieving some level of fluency, then the Commission's work will be well on its way, she noted. One of the limiting factors at present is the lack of skilled Maori language instructors.

Waitangi Day

¶10. (SBU) On February 5 and 6, Codel Faleomavaega and conoff traveled to Waitangi, northern New Zealand, to participate in events surrounding Waitangi Day, New Zealand's de facto national day. The Codel attended the Governor-General's receptions in Waitangi on February 5 and had a private dinner that night with Foreign Minister Winston Peters. During the reception, Faleomavaega had pull-aside meetings with Prime Minister Helen Clark, opposition leader John Key, and Minister of (among other portfolios) Youth Namia Mahuta. All these meetings kept in the general spirit of emphasizing ways for the relationship between New Zealand and the United States to grow in understanding and mutual benefit. The dinner with Peters,

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an old friend of the Congressman, was highly convivial. The single policy message between the two principals was the shared concern that the United States should be better represented in Pacific matters; in the resulting vacuum, China and Taiwan have played a stronger role.

¶11. (SBU) Codel Faleomavaega did not have the opportunity to clear this message.

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